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2011 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

A survey was completed to determine the number of harvest tag holders who set traps for marten and fisher, the number of animals caught, the types of traps used, and the number of days spent trapping. In 2011, 1,710 furtakers obtained a harvest tag to trap marten or fisher, compared to 1,547 tag holders in 2010 (11% increase). About 26% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (453 trappers) and 29% set traps for fisher (500). These trappers spent about 3,431 days trapping marten, captured 289 marten, and registered 216 marten. An additional 109 marten were caught in traps of trappers targeting other species, and 16 of these non-target marten were registered. The number of trappers targeting marten and their trapping effort did not change significantly between 2010 and 2011. However, the number of marten registered declined significantly by 22% between 2010 and 2011 (296 versus 232). Trapper effort per registered marten was not significantly different in 2011 than 2010 (15.9 versus 13.3 days). An estimated 500 trappers spent 4,109 days trapping fisher, captured 274 fisher, and registered 194 fisher. An additional 103 fisher were caught in traps of trappers targeting other species, and 9 of the non-target fisher were registered. The number of trappers seeking fisher was nearly unchanged from 2010; however, their trapping effort decreased 17%, and the number of fisher registered by all trappers decreased 38% between 2010 and 2011. Furthermore, trapper effort per registered fisher was 33% greater in 2011 than 2010 (21.2 versus 15.9 days). The decline in harvest of marten and fisher in 2011 from 2010 was expected because the seasonal take of marten and fisher was reduced from four animals (one marten and three fisher) to one animal (species combined).



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INTRODUCTION

The Natural Resources Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have the authority and responsibility to protect and manage the wildlife resources of the state of Michigan. Harvest surveys are important management tools used to help accomplish this statutory responsibility. The main objectives of this harvest survey were to determine the number of trappers who set traps for marten (*Martes americana*) and fisher (*M. pennanti*), the types of traps used, the number of days trapped, and the number of animals captured.

Efforts to restore the American marten and fisher have been successful throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) (Williams et al. 2007). As a result, the first modern fisher trapping season was initiated in 1989, and the first modern marten trapping season was initiated in 2000.

In 2011, the marten and fisher trapping season was December 1-15 in the entire UP, except Drummond Island, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and Seney National Wildlife Refuge. In order to trap either marten or fisher, trappers were required to obtain a free harvest tag, in addition to a Fur Harvester License. The number of marten and fisher that could be legally taken was reduced in 2011, compared to 2010. Trappers were limited to one marten or one fisher in 2011, while trappers were allowed to take one marten and three fisher in 2010. Successful trappers were required to register all fisher and marten taken by December 20, 2011. If trappers captured more animals than allowed to keep or caught animals outside of the season (incidental captures), these trappers were required to release these incidental captures alive. If these incidental captures could not be released alive, trappers were required to bring these incidental catches to a registration station. The DNR kept incidental captures. Trappers could use body-gripping (e.g., conibear) traps and foothold traps to capture marten and fisher. Live traps were also legal if set within 150 yards of a residence or farm building.

METHODS

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to everyone who obtained a marten or fisher trapping permit in 2011 (1,710 permit holders). Trappers receiving the questionnaire were asked to report if they set traps for marten or fisher, number of days spent afield (i.e., effort), number of marten and fisher caught and released alive, and number of marten and fisher registered (registration estimates included incidentally caught animals that were not returned to the trapper). The number of days spent afield was reported as the number of days in which a trapper had at least one trap set. Trappers were asked to report whether any marten and fisher captured were taken in traps set for them or taken in traps set for another species. Trappers were also asked to indicate their impression of the status of the marten and fisher populations in the county where they primarily trapped (i.e., absent, stable, increasing, or decreasing).

Although all permit holders were sent a questionnaire, not everybody returned their questionnaire. To extrapolate from the tag holders that returned their questionnaire to all people obtaining harvest tags, estimates were calculated using a simple random sampling design (Cochran 1977).

A 95% confidence limit (CL) was calculated for each estimate. In theory, the CL can be added and subtracted from the estimate to calculate the 95% confidence interval. The confidence

interval is a measure of the precision associated with the estimate and implies that the true value would be within this interval 95 times out of 100. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include failure of participants to provide answers (nonresponse bias), question wording, and question order. It is very difficult to measure these biases; thus, estimates were not adjusted for these possible biases.

Statistical tests are used routinely to determine the likelihood that the differences among estimates are larger than expected by chance alone. The overlap of 95% confidence intervals was used to determine whether estimates differed. Non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals was equivalent to stating that the difference between the means was larger than would be expected 995 out of 1,000 times, if the study had been repeated (Payton et al. 2003).

Questionnaires were mailed initially during mid-January 2012, and up to two follow-up questionnaires were mailed to nonrespondents. Questionnaires were undeliverable to 37 harvest tag holders. Questionnaires were returned by 1,084 of 1,673 people receiving the questionnaire (65% response rate).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2011, 1,710 trappers obtained harvest tags to trap either marten or fisher, compared to 1,547 tag holders in 2010 (11% increase). Men obtained most of the marten and fisher harvest tags (1,621). Women obtained 86 harvest tags, and the sex of three tag holders was unknown.

Marten

About 26% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (453 trappers, Table 1). About $49 \pm 4\%$ of these trappers successfully captured at least one marten. The trappers targeting marten spent 3,431 days trapping ($\bar{x} = 7.6 \pm 0.4$ days/trapper), captured 289 marten, and registered 216 marten (Table 2). An additional 109 marten were caught in traps of trappers targeting another species, and 16 of these non-target marten were registered. Among trappers seeking marten, the greatest numbers of marten were captured in Marquette (71), Chippewa (54), and Baraga (41) counties.

Although the number of trappers targeting marten decreased 9% (453 versus 492 trappers) and their trapping effort decreased 11% (3,431 versus 3,866 days, Figure 1) between 2010 and 2011, these changes were not significantly different. The number of marten registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting marten and trappers that caught non-target marten) declined significantly by 22% between 2010 and 2011 (232 versus 296 marten, Figure 1). This decline in harvest was expected because the seasonal take of marten and fisher was reduced from four animals (one marten and three fisher) to one animal (species combined). Among trappers targeting marten, the mean number of days of effort per registered marten was 15.9 ± 1.6 days in 2011, which was not significantly different from the estimate from 2010 (13.3 days, Figure 2).

The mean number of days of effort per registered marten was correlated with the mean value of marten pelts during 2000-2010 (Pearson product moment correlation coefficient $[r] = 0.73$,

probability of obtaining this result [P] = 0.01) (Figure 3). The correlation between trapping effort and pelt prices ($r = 0.67$, $P = 0.02$) was also significant.

Most trappers used body-gripping type traps (e.g., conibears) to capture marten ($85 \pm 2\%$), although foothold traps also were used frequently ($33 \pm 3\%$). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 4.6 ± 0.3 . Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set per day was 4.4 ± 0.5 .

Twenty-eight percent of marten trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed marten numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while $34 \pm 3\%$ thought marten numbers were stable, $7 \pm 2\%$ thought marten were declining, $6 \pm 2\%$ indicated marten were not present, and $25 \pm 3\%$ did not comment on the status of marten.

Fisher

About 29% of the marten and fisher tag holders set traps for fisher (500 trappers, Table 1). About $40 \pm 3\%$ of these trappers successfully captured at least one fisher. Trappers targeting fishers spent 4,109 days trapping (8.2 ± 0.4 days/trapper), captured 272 fisher, and registered 194 fisher (Table 3). An additional 103 fisher were caught in traps of trappers targeting another species, and 9 of the non-target fisher were registered. Among trappers seeking fisher, the greatest numbers of fisher were captured in Baraga (30), Keweenaw (30), Iron (28), Marquette (28), and Ontonagon (28) counties.

Between 2010 and 2011, the number of trappers targeting fisher did not change significantly (500 versus 493 trappers in 2010) but their trapping effort decreased significantly by 17% (4,109 versus 4,942 days, Figure 4). The number of fisher registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting fisher and trappers that caught non-target fisher) decreased significantly by 38% between 2010 and 2011 (203 versus 327 fisher, Figure 4). This decline in harvest was expected because the seasonal take of marten and fisher was reduced from four animals (one marten and three fisher) to one animal (species combined). Among trappers targeting fisher, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was 21.2 ± 1.8 days in 2011, which was significantly greater than the estimate for 2010 (15.9 days, Figure 5).

The mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was not significantly correlated with the mean value of fisher pelts during 1997-2010 ($r = 0.46$, $P = 0.09$; Figure 6). In contrast, the correlations between the number of trappers and pelt prices ($r = 0.65$, $P = 0.01$) and between trapping effort and pelt prices ($r = 0.63$, $P = 0.01$) were significant.

Most trappers used body-gripping traps (e.g., conibears) to capture fisher ($79 \pm 3\%$), although foothold traps also were used frequently ($43 \pm 3\%$). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 4.6 ± 0.3 traps. Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set daily was 4.7 ± 0.4 traps.

Twenty-two percent of fisher trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed fisher numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while $34 \pm 3\%$ thought fisher numbers were stable, $14 \pm 2\%$ thought they were declining, $2 \pm 1\%$ indicated fisher were absent, and $27 \pm 3\%$ did not comment on the status of fisher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Table 1. Estimated harvest tag holders that attempted to trap marten or fisher in Michigan during 2011 season.

Species sought by tag holders	%	95% CL ^a	Total	95% CL ^a
Trapped only marten	8	1	129	16
Trapped only fisher	10	1	177	19
Trapped both marten and fisher	19	1	323	24
Trapped either marten or fisher	37	2	629	30
Trapped marten ^b	26	2	453	27
Trapped fisher ^c	29	2	500	28

^a95% confidence limits.

^bSum of trappers that trapped only marten and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

^cSum of trappers that trapped only fisher and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

Table 2. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, marten captured (including all incidental catches and releases), marten released alive, and marten registered (including incidental catches) during the 2011 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and area trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Marten captured ^a		Marten released alive		Marten registered ^b	
	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL
Trappers that set traps targeting marten										
Alger	41	9	267	76	24	8	2	2	22	7
Baraga	54	11	303	76	41	15	16	12	25	7
Chippewa	76	13	450	91	54	11	3	3	50	10
Delta	5	3	39	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	9	5	140	68	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	28	8	297	91	3	3	0	0	3	3
Houghton	24	7	129	46	25	11	11	8	14	6
Iron	39	9	298	85	16	7	5	6	11	5
Keweenaw	6	4	43	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luce	38	9	241	68	21	7	2	2	19	6
Mackinac	21	7	185	68	5	3	2	2	3	3
Marquette	80	13	568	113	71	19	19	11	52	13
Menominee	14	6	134	59	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	24	7	175	64	13	6	5	4	8	4
Schoolcraft	25	7	156	58	17	9	9	6	8	4
Unknown	2	2	6	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	453	27	3,431	281	289	35	73	25	216	22
Trappers that captured marten in traps set to catch another species										
Alger	3	3	NA	NA	3	3	2	2	2	2
Baraga	5	3	NA	NA	5	3	5	3	0	0
Chippewa	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iron	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keweenaw	3	3	NA	NA	5	4	5	4	0	0
Luce	6	4	NA	NA	9	6	9	6	0	0
Mackinac	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Marquette	13	6	NA	NA	54	39	39	38	14	10
Menominee	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	8	4	NA	NA	19	11	19	11	0	0
Schoolcraft	2	2	NA	NA	3	4	3	4	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
LP ^c	3	3	NA	NA	8	7	8	7	0	0
Subtotal ^d	49	10	NA	NA	109	43	93	41	16	10
Grand total ^d	473	28	3,431	281	398	57	166	49	232	26

^aAll marten removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

^bIncludes incidentally caught marten that were not returned to the trapper.

^cCounties in the Lower Peninsula.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to totals because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

Table 3. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, fisher captured (including all incidental catches and releases), fisher released alive, and fisher registered (including incidental catches) by trappers during the 2011 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and county trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Fisher captured ^a		Fisher released alive		Fisher registered ^b	
	95%		95%		95%		95%		95%	
	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c
Trappers that set traps targeting fisher										
Alger	36	9	207	67	21	7	5	3	16	6
Baraga	41	9	282	77	30	20	0	0	16	6
Chippewa	38	9	219	62	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delta	16	6	153	62	6	4	0	0	6	4
Dickinson	30	8	304	92	16	6	0	0	16	6
Gogebic	39	9	402	104	19	7	2	2	17	6
Houghton	22	7	140	51	11	6	2	2	9	5
Iron	54	11	439	104	28	11	9	6	19	6
Keweenaw	14	6	69	33	30	21	5	6	11	5
Luce	35	9	208	63	11	7	6	6	5	3
Mackinac	22	7	191	67	9	6	5	6	5	3
Marquette	68	12	544	114	28	11	9	6	19	7
Menominee	41	9	380	98	16	6	0	0	16	6
Ontonagon	46	10	364	94	28	9	5	3	24	7
Schoolcraft	30	8	191	63	19	8	5	4	14	6
Unknown	3	3	14	12	2	2	0	0	2	2
Subtotal ^d	500	28	4,109	302	274	40	52	19	194	20
Trappers that captured fisher in traps set to catch another species										
Alger	9	5	NA	NA	14	8	13	7	2	2
Baraga	5	3	NA	NA	11	8	11	8	0	0
Chippewa	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	2	2	NA	NA	3	4	3	4	0	0
Gogebic	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Houghton	9	5	NA	NA	9	5	8	4	2	2
Iron	6	5	NA	NA	8	6	5	4	3	3
Keweenaw	6	4	NA	NA	14	10	14	10	0	0
Luce	5	3	NA	NA	9	8	8	8	2	2
Mackinac	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marquette	9	5	NA	NA	19	10	17	10	2	2
Menominee	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Ontonagon	6	4	NA	NA	9	6	9	6	0	0
Schoolcraft	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total ^d	60	11	4,109	302	103	23	93	22	9	5

^aAll fisher removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

^bIncludes incidentally caught fisher that were not returned to the trapper.

^c95% confidence limits.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to statewide total because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

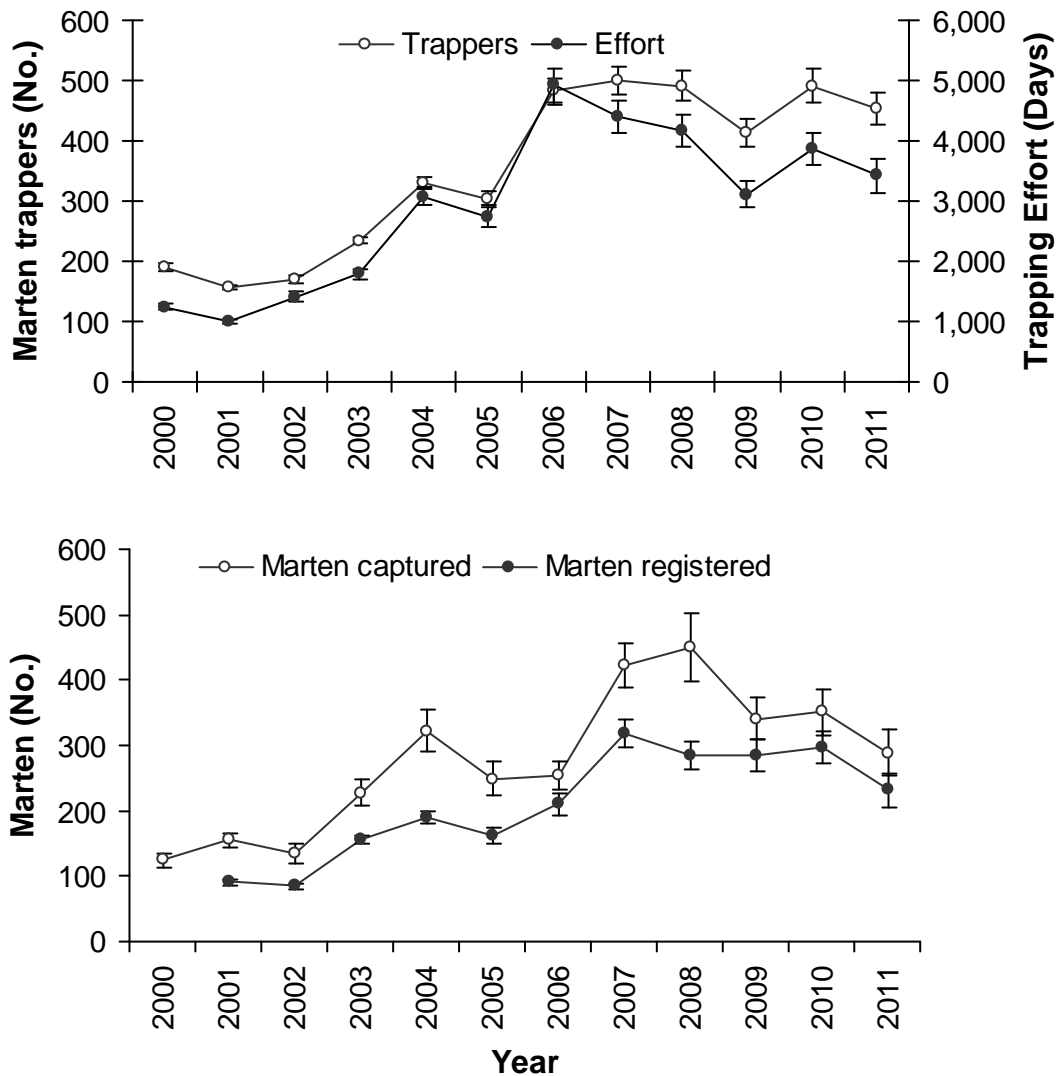


Figure 1. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of marten captured and registered in Michigan, 2000-2011. Registration total was not estimated in 2000. Beginning in 2006, the estimates of marten captured and registered included incidental animals that the trapper was not allowed to keep; estimates from previous years excluded incidental animals. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers specifically targeting martens, but estimates of marten captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included marten taken by trappers not targeting marten).

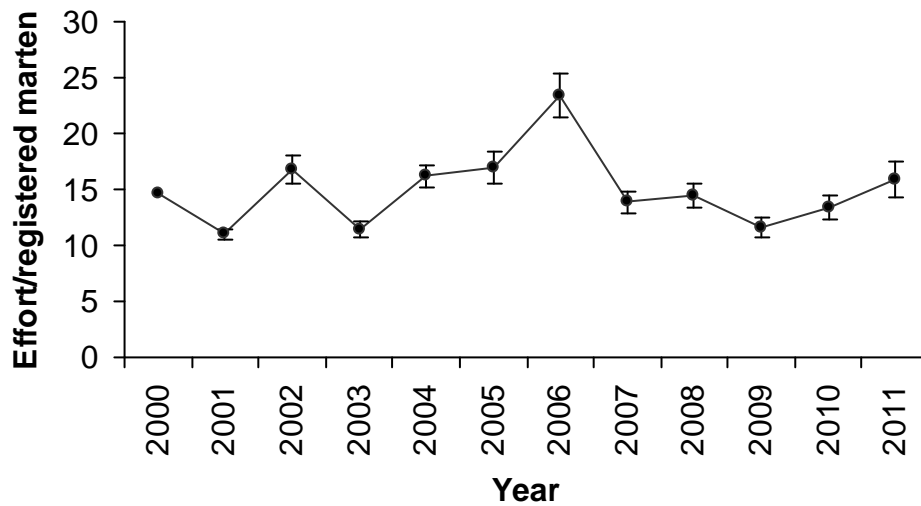


Figure 2. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan during 2000-2011. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

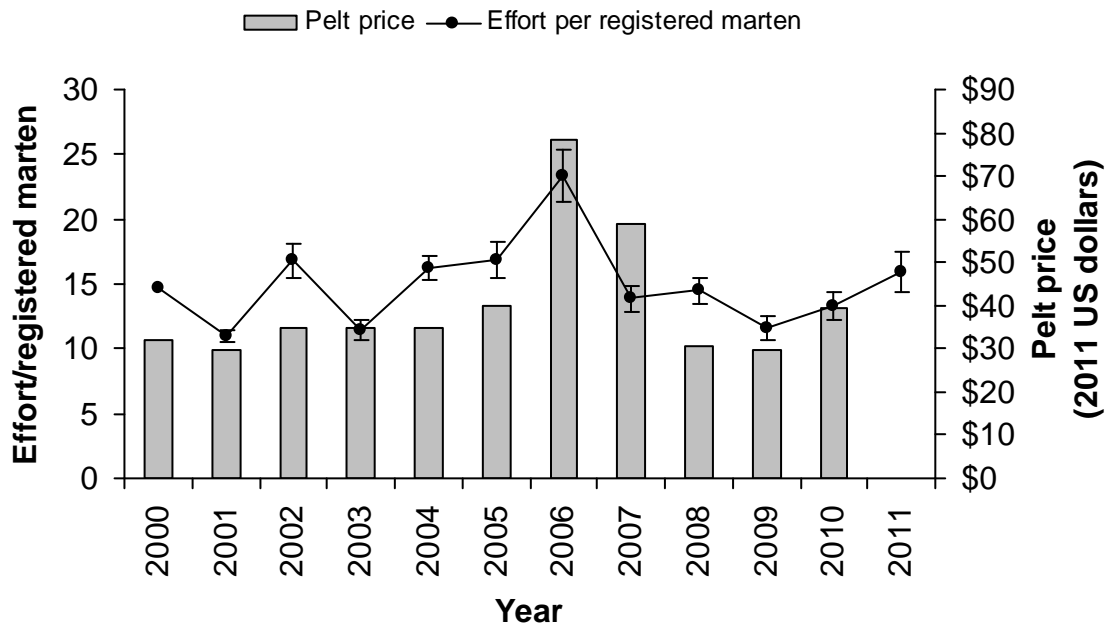


Figure 3. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 2000-2010. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2011). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2011 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting marten.

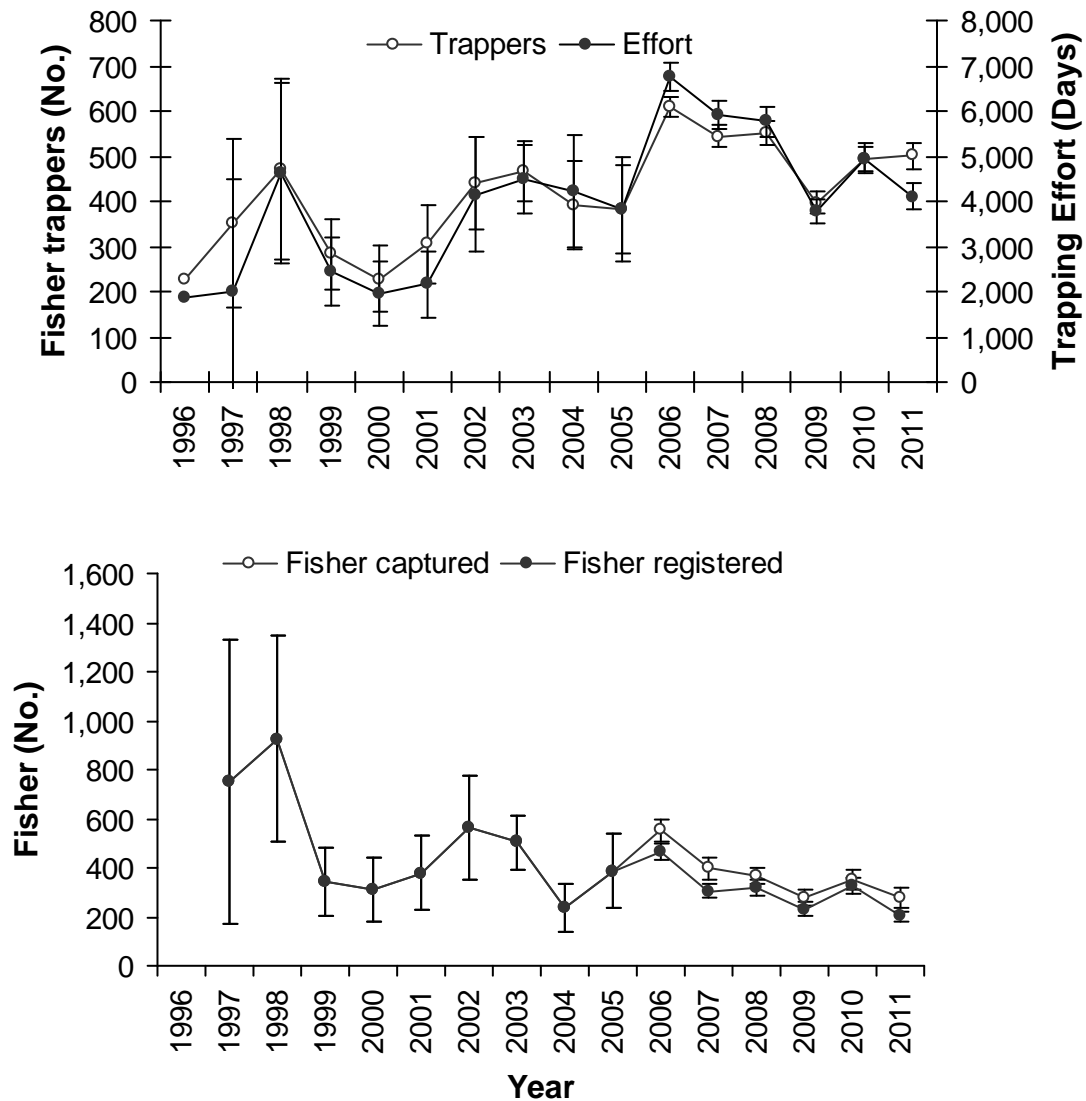


Figure 4. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of fisher captured and registered in Michigan, 1996-2011. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers targeting fishers, but estimates of fisher captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included fisher taken by trappers not targeting fisher).

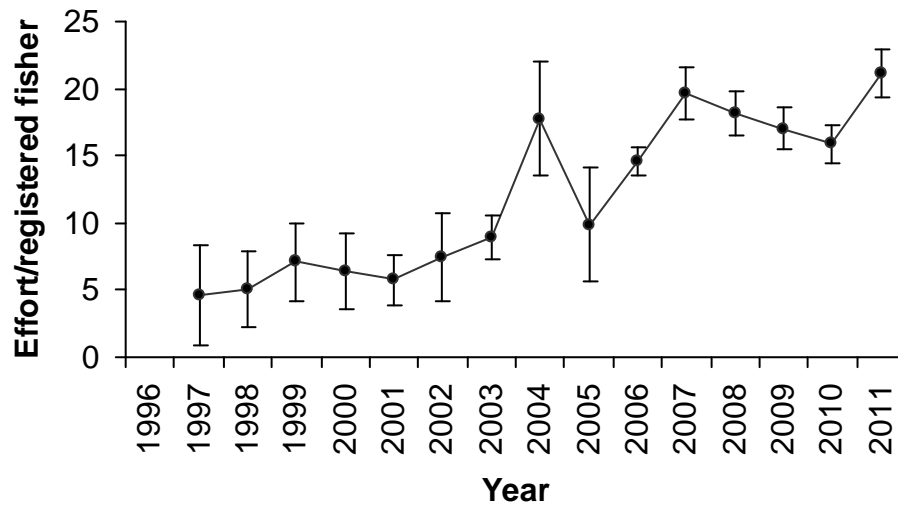


Figure 5. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan during 1997-2011. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

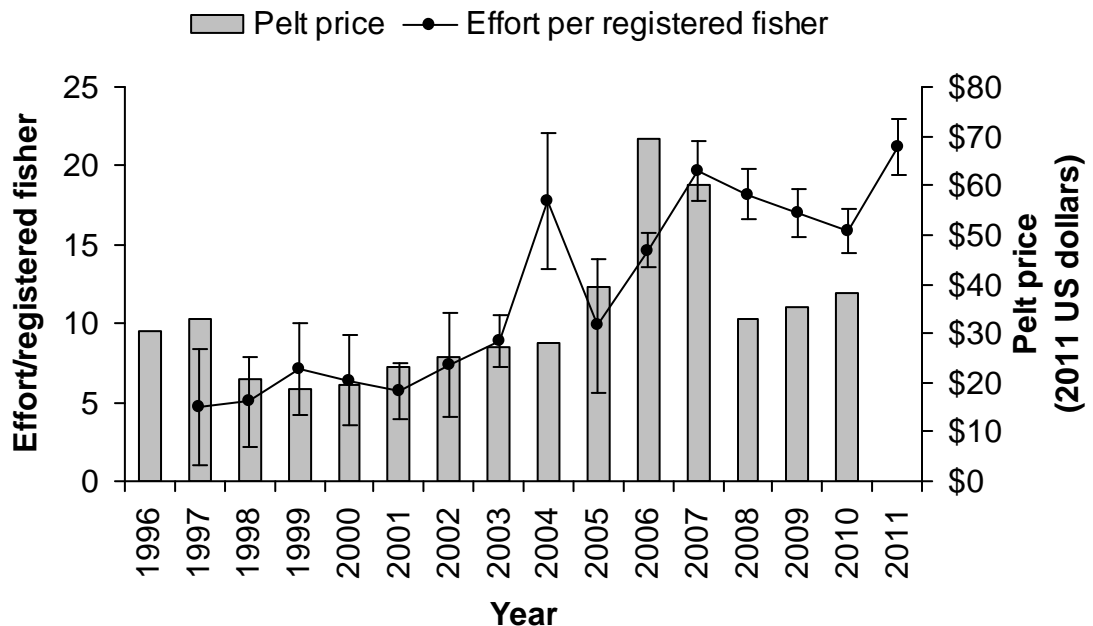


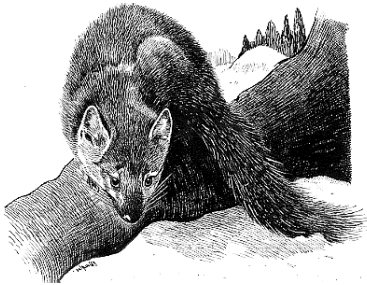
Figure 6. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 1996-2010. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2011) and Wisconsin (Dhuey 2011). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2011 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

Appendix A. The questionnaire sent to people who obtained a marten or fisher trapping permit in 2011.



2011 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST REPORT

This information is requested under authority of Part 435, 1994 PA 451, M.C.L. 324.43539.



It is important that you complete and return this questionnaire even if you did not trap or capture a marten or fisher.

1. Did you place traps for marten during the 2011 season (December 1-15)?

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 5.

2. If you trapped during the 2011 marten season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR MARTEN (List each county that you trapped for marten.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR MARTEN	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all marten that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

3. How many of the following traps did you set for marten in 2011?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

_____ Foothold
_____ Conibear
_____ Other (Please specify_____)

4. What is the status of marten in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2011?

¹ ☐ Increasing ² ☐ Decreasing ³ ☐ Stable ⁴ ☐ Not present ⁵ ☐ Not sure

5. Did you incidentally catch any marten while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #2.

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 7.

6. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental martens you captured. Please do not report marten already reported in question #2.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental marten.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental marten that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

7. Did you place traps for fisher during the 2011 season (December 1-15)?

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, skip to question #11.

8. If you trapped during the 2011 fisher season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR FISHER (List each county that you trapped for fisher.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR FISHER	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only fishers you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all fisher that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

9. How many of the following traps did you set for fisher in 2011?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

_____ Foothold
_____ Conibear
_____ Other (Please specify_____)

10. What is the status of fisher in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2011?

¹ ☐ Increasing ² ☐ Decreasing ³ ☐ Stable ⁴ ☐ Not present ⁵ ☐ Not sure

11. Did you incidentally catch any fisher while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #8.

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 13.

12. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental fisher you captured. Please do not report fisher already reported in question #8.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental fisher.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental fisher you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental fisher that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

13. Do you have any comments or suggestions about marten or fisher management in Michigan?

Please return questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.
Thank you for your help!

www.michigan.gov/dnr